

Teaching Spanish Pronunciation at the High School Level

An Honors Thesis
(Honors 499)

by

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Chin-Sook Pak", is written over a horizontal line.

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Abstract

The pronunciation of a language is one of the first qualities a native speaker notices in a non-native. However, pronunciation receives relatively little attention in high school foreign language curriculum. The following is an investigation into this issue. The study first provides an overview of literature regarding current and past trends of teaching foreign language pronunciation. It then investigates current methods of teaching Spanish pronunciation at the high school level by means of personal interviews with eighteen current Spanish teachers from various East Central Indiana high schools. The research and interview findings suggest that although most teachers acknowledge the need to include pronunciation in their curriculum, they are not certain how to go about doing so. Finally, the study provides some insight into the importance of proper pronunciation and provides pedagogical suggestions for improving the quality of instruction.

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Statement of Purpose

After finishing my junior year of high school four years ago, I was accepted to travel to San Luis Potosí, Mexico to study Spanish. I went with a group of approximately 30 other high school students from various parts of the state of Indiana. For the first time in the course of my studies, I came in contact with students from many different schools, studying under many different teachers. I quickly learned that several of the others were more advanced in the areas of Spanish grammar and vocabulary, but I noticed a different trend where Spanish pronunciation was concerned. Some of the most advanced students also had the poorest pronunciation.

At times, their heavy American accents made these students difficult to understand. This statement is based on comments which came directly from native speakers about a particular member of the group. He was a very highly motivated student and to be perfectly honest, he knew more than many of the students did in areas of Spanish such as sentence structure and verb forms. He had been placed at the second level of three based on what he knew when he entered the program. On several occasions he spent time with my host family and that of my host “aunt”. One day when my “aunt” and I were talking she said to me: “You know, ----- seems to be a really great guy, but it is so hard to understand him!” My host “mother” agreed.

This difficulty in understanding did not arise from his lack of knowledge of the language itself. Rather, it was solely based on his poor pronunciation. His accent was very obvious to many other non-native speakers. Although fellow English speakers could usually understand his Spanish, it was much more difficult for a native speaker to figure out what he was trying to say.

A second encounter with students of Spanish outside high school came at the college level. As in San Luis Potosí, many students knew as much or more than others about the language, but their pronunciation was quite far from native-like. The most bothersome reality of this situation is that a large portion of these students are studying to become teachers. This means that they will more than likely be passing on their heavily Americanized Spanish accents to their students.

In light of past and present interaction with fellow students and the flagrant pronunciation errors they commit, the aim of this study is to examine the role of teaching pronunciation at the high school level. It attempts to better understand where the problem lies and to seek ways to enhance the quality of Spanish education so that students would be able to maximize their ability to produce more native-like pronunciation of Spanish. Some teachers are under the impression that the ability to acquire proper pronunciation is solely an inherited trait. If so, there is really nothing anyone can do to aid students. However, there are people who will admit that learning a native-like accent did not come to them easily or naturally and yet they were able to acquire very accurate pronunciation despite the difficulties they may have had. In light of this fact, it becomes more obvious that part of the problem may lie in the way the students are taught. For this reason, the study focuses on teachers' methods for teaching Spanish pronunciation.

First, the study will provide a summary of literature regarding foreign language pronunciation acquisition. Second, it will discuss an investigation of current methods of teaching Spanish pronunciation at the high school level. Finally, it will present conclusions and suggestions for improving the quality of pronunciation instruction based on the research and interview findings.

Literature Review

Shortly after babies are born they have the ability to produce a nearly unlimited range of sounds. Gradually, as the baby grows, it begins to distinguish between those sounds which are used regularly by his parents and other persons in his environment and those sounds which are unnecessary (Dalbor 6). This selective use of certain sounds is known as language. As we develop and mature many changes occur which influence our ability to learn and utilize sounds. Hence, most people experience at least some degree of difficulty in acquiring mastery of a second language, specifically the acquisition of native-like pronunciation.

According to Tracy Terrell, author of “Teaching Spanish pronunciation in a communicative approach”, the ability to acquire a native accent has a direct correlation to age. In a study of foreign individuals of various age groups arriving in the United States, it was shown that 85% of children under the age of 10 achieved mastery of native pronunciation whereas only 50% of those between the ages of 10 and 15 attained the same level. Furthermore, only 2% of individuals over the age of 15 acquired a native accent. Contradictory to this data, an examination of the foreign language classrooms seems to show that it is the adults who are better able to comprehend and retain the information they are taught. However, under more long-term exposure to the language, children will catch-up to, and ultimately surpass the adults (Terrell 200).

There are many theories as to why children seem more capable of mastering a second language. In his book *Spanish/English Contrasts*, Stanley Whitley holds to the theory of coordinate bilingualism versus subordinate bilingualism. Coordinate bilingualism states that children are naturally still in the process of learning their first

language and are flexible enough to learn a second language simultaneously. On the other hand, adults have already become fossilized in their first language. Consequently, in order to learn a second language, they must construct it on top of the first. This is subordinate bilingualism (Whitley 360).

Whether or not it is possible for individuals over the age of 15 to actually attain mastery of pronunciation at the level of a native speaker is under some degree of debate. For the sake of this research, I shall refer to anyone over the age of 15 as an adult. Some feel that native-like pronunciation is an unrealistic goal for adults and that the goal of their instruction should be geared towards achieving a "clear, understandable pronunciation not apt to offend the native speaker" (Terrell 202).

Other scholars such as Raymond Elliot and Arnulfo Ramírez disagree with the idea of settling for a merely understandable pronunciation and hold to the theory that with the right instruction and under the right circumstances the adult can indeed achieve an almost native accent. In their drill book *Patterns of Spanish Pronunciation*, Bowen and Stockwell state that the goal of most foreign language teachers and "well-motivated" students is to achieve fluent and accurate pronunciation (Bowen 3). Studies show that this idea of the "well-motivated" student indeed has a direct correlation to success in L2 acquisition (Elliott 1995, Ramírez 131).

A closer examination presented by Whitley finds that the student's motives for learning a second language can be broken down and equated to 3 different levels of success, the first being the "instrumental" level. Here, the student's learning interest is based on a desire to gain the ability to imitate or understand the basics of the language. An example would be a student who learns to sing in a certain foreign language or to read

simple texts. This student, however, does not normally gain the ability to communicate. On the second, or "manipulative" level, basic communicative skills are achieved. These students study a second language in order to help themselves communicate on a basic level for the purposes gaining an advantage in business, tourism, or for some other personal gain. The third and final level, known as the "integrative" level, is where the student is most likely to obtain a near native level of pronunciation. At this point, the student's desire is to become as much a part of the culture of the language's native speakers as possible (Whitley 362). According to John Dalbor in his book *Spanish Pronunciation: Theory and Practice*, language and culture are extremely interrelated. It is virtually impossible to learn a foreign culture without learning the language and vice versa (Dalbor 7, Whitley 347).

Another theory on the differences between children and adults suggests that the problem adults deal with is not one of internal interference but rather comes from an external source. Looking back to the example of the baby learning his first language, we see that he never stops practicing the sounds he hears around him (Dalbor 6). Children, in fact, must continually perfect their language as part of the maturation process. They are curious and eager to experiment with language in an effort to learn more. The adult on the other hand deals with many more external pressures than a child. By the end of adolescence, most individuals have established a certain identity. The acquisition of a second language usually requires that the person's identity be somewhat altered (Whitley 363). Many adults feel embarrassed or frustrated by committing errors which inevitably arise during the course of language learning. To them, making errors is not only embarrassing, but it threatens their established image and their ego (Whitley 361). So if

the acquisition of a native-like accent is so difficult for adults, many are led to wonder why it is even worthwhile to teach pronunciation.

Although it may be more difficult for them beyond the age of 15, many students list their main goal in studying a foreign language as being able to speak it clearly. Most natives judge a foreign speaker's fluency according to their accent (Alley 1991). Any native who has listened to a foreigner speak their language can relate to this concept (Lunn 1982). Not only is fluency judged by the non-native speaker's accent, but their personality, intelligence, race or even social status may be prematurely judged based on their pronunciation of a foreign language (Morley 70). Not only does this phenomenon affect the native listener's perception, but it may also have a negative impact on the non-native speaker. If a non-native speaker is misunderstood repeatedly, he may become discouraged and stop interacting with native speakers, thereby halting further progression and development (Morley 67). In addition to native interaction, formal instruction in the target language is a necessary element in preventing fossilization of poor pronunciation habits that a student may acquire if left to achieve the foreign accent on his own (Alley 1991).

Most foreign language teachers acknowledge the need to teach pronunciation, but relatively few know how to deal with the subject. Typical textbooks emphasize pronunciation instruction in the first year and then not again until phonetics is introduced around the third year (Elliott 1995). Little attention is paid to pronunciation at the intermediate level. However, in recent years, greater interest has developed with regard to teaching pronunciation due to the increasing number of people who need to acquire first-

rate foreign language skills in order to be competitive in today's global job market (Morley 68).

Many methods of foreign language instruction have been developed in past decades, each with varying degrees of emphasis on pronunciation. One of the earlier methods was the grammar translation method. Under grammar translation, students received little to no instruction in pronunciation and were expected to acquire it naturally as they progressed in their studies (Terrell 196).

A second, more recent and more widely debated method of instruction was that of the audio-lingual method which was developed in the 70's. Audio-lingual instruction deals with teaching students correct pronunciation through sound-letter instruction at the level of words or phrases (Heflin 1978). As the name indicates, listening and speaking are the principle areas of interest, thereby placing reading and writing in a secondary position (Estrellas 1972). A major problem this presents is that through this system, students are limited in their ability to associate the sounds that they learn to produce with printed words (Lunn 1982).

More debate over the audio-lingual method comes from the fact that often the letters and words used in exercises are taken completely out of context (Ramírez 1995). Many times, the repetition drills focus on the teacher who is dictating the words or phrases rather than centering around the students. These exercises involve little or no actual thinking on the part of the learner. (Alley 1991).

Another fault of the audio-lingual system is the heavy, overt correction of errors that often occurs. Error correction will have one of two effects on the student. It can be a source of positive feedback which will help the student improve, or it may serve to

discourage the student (Ramírez 138). In the case of audio-lingual instruction, the latter result of error correction is often the case. Many times, the teacher may be so focused on a single student's correct production of one word that the student is singled out, causing him to feel frustrated and embarrassed. The audio-lingual method does seem to have the ability to produce better pronunciation in many students, but this occurs at the cost of the student's freedom of expression and experimentation (Terrell 197).

A related method of instruction which deals with pronunciation is that of aural discrimination drills. Supporters of the aural discrimination drills believe that there are three main skills a student must learn in order to maximize their ability to achieve proper pronunciation. First and foremost, they must learn to hear and imitate new sounds. They must also be able to refrain from making connections between sounds they are already accustomed to and new, unfamiliar sounds. That is to say, the student must make every effort not to carry over sounds from his first language to the second (Resnick 13). One of the most common errors of L2 learners is that they try to equate sounds from their native language with sounds of the second. The goal really should be the opposite; to hear how similar sounds are different (Bowen 1). Finally, the student must learn to modify his manner of producing sounds in order to attain a native-like accent (Bowen 1).

A final method of foreign language instruction that has developed over the years and is now commonly used in the classroom is the communicative approach. Here, the goal is to shift the focus from simply knowing a language to actually using it. However, even with a focus on practicing language use, i.e. communicating, proper pronunciation still seems to receive less emphasis than other foreign language skills. This probably

stems from an ongoing attitude that pronunciation accuracy is the least useful skill and also the most difficult for adult learners to master (Elliott 1997).

From the various foreign language instruction methods developed over the years have evolved an even greater number of specific classroom strategies. Most scholars agree that the level of confidence a student feels with his pronunciation has a direct correlation to the student's progress. Through formal instruction, the student can overcome his difficulties (Elliott 1995b). By overcoming such difficulties, the student feels more comfortable and becomes much more inclined to participate openly in class. This in turn leads to an improvement of his other foreign language skills in the process (Lunn 1982). The student may also feel more inclined to seek out and converse with native speakers of the language or to travel abroad (Elliott 1997, 1995b).

Teachers in all fields also agree that students possess a wide variety of different learning styles. As in other fields, foreign language teachers should strive to present the instruction of pronunciation through a variety of different techniques in order to accommodate their students' differences (Elliott 1997, Morley 69). Many foreign language teachers make the mistake of presenting excessive amounts of rules to follow. This is known as the "prescriptive" approach. The problem is that many students become overwhelmed by all of the do's and don'ts of the language. Although some rules must be learned in the process, a more "descriptive" approach to foreign language seems to be more effective. In this approach, students do not necessarily learn what should and should not be said, but rather what *is* said by native speakers of the language (Dalbor 9).

The most important person to the foreign language classroom is the teacher. Instructors of foreign language have many responsibilities, but there are two of particular

importance. First, the teacher is there to guide the students. The guidance of the students involves both correction and encouragement. These two areas must be balanced in order to most effectively help the learner. The second role of the instructor is that of the model. It cannot be stressed enough that the teacher must have pronunciation as close to native as possible in order to provide an accurate example for the students to follow (Bowen).

In her article “A Multidimensional Curriculum Design for Speech-Pronunciation Instruction”, Joan Morley presents a four step outline of how language teachers should incorporate pronunciation into their curriculum. They are:

1. diagnostic assessment of learner needs
2. development of short and long-term goals in consultation with the learner
3. preparation of group and individual lesson plans
4. implementation of a variety of instructional and speech-pronunciation activities (68-69)

Regardless of which methods are selected by the teacher, repetition is key to maximizing the amount of exposure the students receive (Elliott 1995b). In the case of pronunciation, teachers must be sure to provide ample opportunities for the student's to practice (Lunn 1982). Although some instructors would prefer that their students learn the structure of the language before attempting to speak, most believe that language is best learned by use, not learned and then used (Alley 1991).

Method

In reflecting upon the differences among students' pronunciation, it became apparent that part of the discrepancy probably arises due to differences among teachers using different methods of instruction. The most feasible way to gather information on the subject was to get first-hand feedback from the teachers themselves. By asking them questions rather than observing the classroom, teachers were able to give information specifically focusing on their methods of teaching pronunciation. It was also possible to speak to them at their convenience rather than trying to be present for a set class time. Finally, the interview was very informal so that teachers would feel more comfortable and inclined to be open and honest, rather than feeling as though they were being judged by an observer.

To begin the investigation, a list of 49 schools from 14 different counties in East Central Indiana was obtained. The schools were then called, the Spanish teachers were contacted, and interviews were scheduled. Ultimately, only 18 interviews were conducted due to time and teacher availability constraints (see Appendix B for individual summaries). The interviews took place from the first week in April through the fourth week of May, 2001.

Upon scheduling the interviews, a letter and a list of interview questions were sent to the participating teachers in order to give a more in depth explanation of the project and give the teachers a chance to ponder the questions and prepare their answers (see Appendix A). In order to encourage them to be completely honest, they were assured in the letter that participation was voluntary and that all of the data would be handled anonymously.

The interview questions focused on each teacher's style of teaching pronunciation such as how much time they spent teaching it, what kinds of materials they used, and what kinds of results they saw in their students. These questions were used in order to find patterns and comparisons among high school foreign language teachers in East Central Indiana and to be able to evaluate these findings in light of published research on the subject. The list of questions is as follows:

1. Do you teach Spanish pronunciation explicitly?
- If not, explain why.
2. What do you think is the best way to teach pronunciation?
3. How do you teach it?
 - A. How much time do you spend teaching it?
 - B. What text or other materials do you use?
4. At what level(s) do you teach pronunciation?
5. From your experience, what methods have worked or not worked for you? Why?
6. What kinds of additional teaching materials (support) would help you teach pronunciation?
7. Does your school system begin teaching Spanish at the high school level or are there classes available before high school?
8. Do you correct your student's pronunciation?
 - A. How often?
 - B. Which errors do you correct?
9. Do you use audio-visual aids?
10. What exposure, if any, do your students get to native speakers?
11. Estimate what percentage of your students leave with a native-like accent.
-what percentage leave with a highly intelligible accent?

Typically, the interviews lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour depending on how focused the teacher was on answering the questions. In many cases, the teachers

were very interested in the project and requested to know how the results came out in order to make changes or improve their programs. Most were more than willing to share with me what they had discovered in the time that they had been teaching Spanish. At almost every school audio recordings of the interviews were made in order to be able to return to the interview and extract the most information possible.

Results and Discussion

After finishing the interviews, all of the data was compiled and evaluated. Eighteen Spanish teachers in East Central Indiana high schools were interviewed. The results of each interview question are discussed below.

Question 1: “Do you teach Spanish pronunciation explicitly?”

Yes	13
No	5

In response, 13 of the 18 teachers claimed that they do teach pronunciation explicitly. However, each teacher had his or her own definition of what exactly “explicit” pronunciation means. In all of these cases the teachers stated that they taught the alphabet, usually placing a slightly heavier focus on vowels, and many admitted to drawing parallels between Spanish and English as examples. Several stated that they hit upon some rules of accentuation, and a few also said that they taught cognates as part of their explicit pronunciation instruction. However, in only one case did the teacher move beyond teaching the rules of pronunciation to teaching the actual mechanics of it such as showing points of articulation and teaching phonetically.

In this case, the teacher stated that she taught pronunciation exactly as she had to learn it. She told me that it was not easy for her to “hear” the Spanish accent when she first began studying Spanish. She had to “see” the accent. What this means is that she needed to visualize the points of articulation in order to know how to form the foreign phonemes. One such example is that of the difference between the English “L” and the Spanish “L”. In English, the sound is often formed towards the back of the mouth

(velarized lateral) as in the word “mill”, whereas in Spanish it is produced using the tip of the tongue just behind the teeth (alveolar lateral) as in the word “mil”.

These results are consistent with a realization that became obvious during a Spanish phonetics class at Ball State University. After an in-depth study on points of articulation for Spanish sounds, the class was asked how many of them had learned that information in high school. Out of a class of 16 students, only one or two people raised their hands. This means that an overwhelming majority of the students had never been introduced to the actual mechanics of forming Spanish sounds.

Question 2: "What do you think is the best way to teach pronunciation?"

listen to natives	7
present and practice	4
teach individual letter sounds	2
teach cognates	2
teach syllables	2
teach phonetically	1

When examining the above data, one must realize that there is a fair amount of overlap between categories. No teacher adheres strictly to one method or the other, but most likely uses a combination of methods with one being more predominant than the others. Here, it is clear that many of the teachers feel that listening to a native accent is crucial to their students' pronunciation acquisition. However, only three of the teachers interviewed were native speakers of Spanish and, as many teachers admitted in a future question, most of the students with non-native teachers have a very limited amount of exposure to natives. In practically every case, teachers stated the need for students to repeat after an accurate model. Four teachers used this method as their main strategy and indicated that they went over the letters of the alphabet and taught their students rules of

pronunciation such as accentuation and word blending. Two teachers said that they focused heavily on individual letter sounds, specifically vowels. Two teachers indicated that the students began by learning whole syllables rather than individual letters, and finally, as mentioned earlier, one teacher stated teaching pronunciation phonetically.

Question 3: "How do you teach it [pronunciation]?"

a. How much time do you spend teaching it?

The answers to this question are very difficult to summarize due to the wide range of replies. Responses varied from teachers who claimed to teach pronunciation only 15 minutes on the first day of Spanish I to teachers who claimed to focus on pronunciation 10-20 minutes every day at all levels. The only response which was the same among several teachers were those that said pronunciation was not specifically taught at certain times, but rather was a matter of ongoing practice and correction.

b. What text or other material do you use?

Bienvenidos series (McGraw Hill)	6
Paso a Paso	4
Spanish for Mastery	1
Somos Así	1
Ven Conmigo	1
Spanish is Fun (Amsco)	1
No text used, only outside material	3
No answer	1

Of the teachers who gave me a concrete answer to the first part of question 3, we can see that there is really no trend concerning the amount of time teachers spend teaching pronunciation. It must be noted that these figures are in reference to teachers' beginning Spanish classes. Inevitably most teachers indicated that at the more advanced level, they tend to teach pronunciation even less.

As far as the text books teachers use are concerned, many teachers in East Central Indiana use the McGraw Hill series of Spanish books to teach their lessons. Many of the texts used such as this series and others have short sections of pronunciation instruction built in to chapters in which certain individual sounds are focused on and usually associated with a comparable sound in English.

Question 4: "At what level(s) do you teach pronunciation?"

beginning of first year	6
throughout first year	3
first and second year	3
all 4 years	1

Not surprisingly, of the thirteen teachers who stated teaching pronunciation explicitly, nine of them teach it only during the first year, and six of those nine teach it solely as an introduction to the language at the beginning of the course. However, most do claim that although pronunciation is not explicitly taught beyond the first year, students are constantly reminded of proper pronunciation throughout their course of study.

Question 5: "From your experience, what methods have not worked for you?"

using tapes to teach	4
drilling rules only	2
seeing Spanish before hearing it	2
being too focused on error correction	2
forcing students to speak too soon	1
it all depends on the student	1

Originally question five stated: "From your experience, what methods have worked or not worked for you? Why?" However, after speaking to several teachers it became clear that the methods they had found to work were the same as the methods they were currently using. Therefore, for most of the interviews, teachers were asked only

what methods they had found not to work. With regard to that question, several teachers could not really think of anything that did not work for them.

The most common answer among those that did respond was that using the tapes included in the text material was the least effective method of teaching pronunciation. In most cases the teachers stated that it was due to the speed of the tapes. Those who were against using the text tapes for instruction felt that the natives on the tapes spoke too quickly for beginning students to understand them. However, several of the other teachers stated that comprehension was not as important as exposing the students to the native accent itself.

This goes along with the theory presented by two of the teachers that seeing the written language before having a good grasp on hearing it can be damaging to a student's ability to acquire native-like pronunciation. Many times if a student sees the word before hearing it, he automatically equates it to known sounds from his first language, thereby making it more difficult to lose his foreign accent. One of the two teachers who presented this idea used the analogy of children learning their first language. They learn to speak it long before they are able to read or write it.

Several of the teachers' responses can be grouped into one category for further examination. They are those who stated that drilling rules, excessive correction, and forcing students to speak too soon are not effective methods of teaching pronunciation. Basically in these three cases, teachers feel that pronunciation becomes so much the focus of the lesson that the students become overwhelmed or discouraged and fail to make any effort at all.

Question 6: "What kind of additional materials (support) would help you teach pronunciation?"

anything "native" (i.e. videos, CDs, guest speakers, etc.)	7
computer labs/programs which chart student pronunciation	3
audio lab	3
video/audio cassettes specifically targeting pronunciation	2
phonetic lessons/ visual aids	2

Remembering back to question two in which seven teachers stated listening to natives as the best way to teach pronunciation, we see results consistent to this in response to question six. Those seven teachers stated that having more materials with examples of native accents would be beneficial to their students' acquisition of Spanish pronunciation. Several other teachers requested more sophisticated technology such as computer labs or programs targeted at helping the students improve their pronunciation or audio labs so that they could more efficiently monitor their students' progress. Still others requested teaching materials such as videos, cassettes, charts, or diagrams whose sole focus is on teaching pronunciation as an addition to the sections found in their students' textbooks.

Question 7: "Does your school system begin teaching Spanish at the high school level or are there classes available before high school?"

elementary exploratory	2
middle school exploratory	7
freshman year	9

The data shows that about half of the schools interviewed do have programs in Spanish prior to entering high school. Unfortunately, as indicated, the programs are exploratory and therefore not very extensive. In most cases, the classes only last between six and nine weeks. Also, many of them are given at the sixth grade level and students are

not exposed to Spanish again for another 3 years when they enter their freshman year of high school.

Question 8: "Do you correct your students' pronunciation?"

a. How often?

100%	2
70-90%	6
30-60%	1
less than 30%	8
none	1

b. Which errors do you correct?

vowel errors	5
errors that change word meaning	3
English transfer errors	1
Sp. phonemes which don't exist in Eng.	1
accentuation errors	2
fricative errors	1
errors common to entire group	1
verb tense ending accentuation	1
errors which hinder/prevent understanding	1
all errors	3
does not correct	1

It was surprising to see that in most cases, teachers either corrected their students almost all of the time or almost never. Only one teacher fell into the range of correcting the students between 30 and 60 percent of the time. Those teachers that correct their students less than 30 percent of the time usually stated that the reason for limited correction was that they wanted to be cautious of the students' feelings and did not want to discourage or frustrate them. Several of the teachers stated that many times students corrected each other. Another interesting observation about the amount of correction the students received is that some teachers start out correcting errors more frequently and

relax later, whereas others begin with little correction and increase as the students progress in their studies.

The question of which errors teachers corrected received a wide variety of responses. Like question 2 concerning teaching methods, many teachers fall into more than one of the above categories of correction. Likewise, there is a degree of overlap in the categories themselves. For instance, vowel errors, accentuation errors and fricative errors very well may be the result of English transfer. In light of this, a large number of the errors which teachers correct are in fact carryovers from English to Spanish. Other errors which several teachers make a point to correct, are those in which the meaning of the word is changed. This category can also be combined with that of verb endings, which can lead to a change in the tense of the verb when not accentuated properly.

Additionally, one teacher stated most commonly correcting errors committed on a regular basis by the entire group and another teacher stated focusing on errors of phonemes which exist in Spanish but not in English.

Question 9: "Do you use audio/visual aids?"

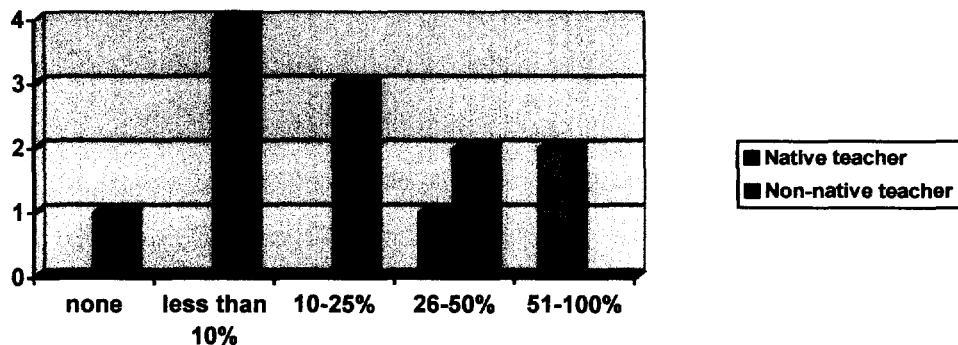
In almost every instance, teachers affirmed using some type of either audio or visual aids. The most common examples of aids that were give were videos that come with text material, popular movies dubbed in Spanish, telenovelas (Spanish soap operas), and popular music. Only one teacher stated no use of audio/visual material. One teacher stated that such audio/visual aids were not used to specifically teach pronunciation, but that they were certainly used for reinforcement.

Question 10: "What exposure, if any, do your students get to native speakers?"

always	3
often	1
sometimes	7
rarely	6
never	1

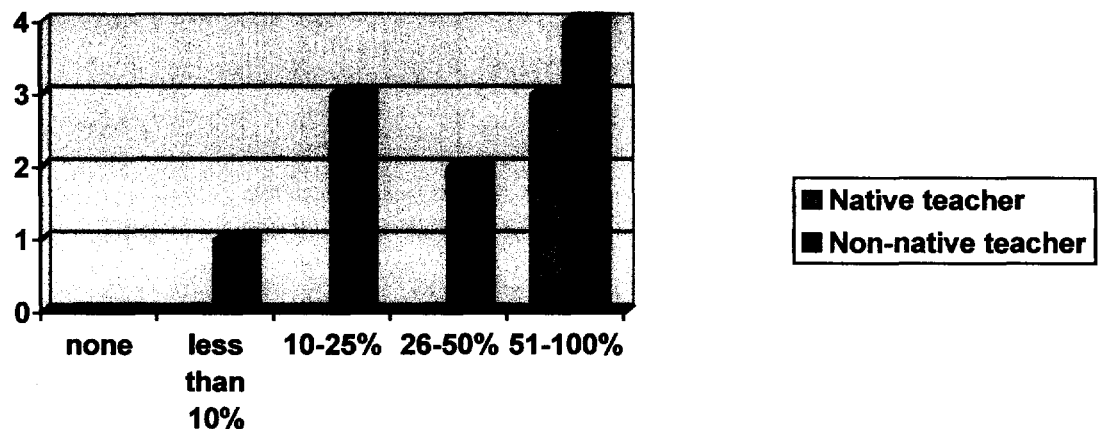
The three teachers whose students are always exposed to native speakers are themselves native speakers. The teacher who responded "often" teaches in an area with a high population of Mexican immigrants. Seven teachers were able to state that their students are at least sometimes exposed to native speakers through the use of audio/visual aids, or occasional interaction with natives in Mexican restaurants. Unfortunately, an equal number of teachers responded that their students are rarely or never exposed to native accents although many of them acknowledge the importance of such exposure.

Question 11: "Estimate what percentage of your students leave with a native-like accent."



This graph shows a comparison between native and non-native teachers opinions concerning the level of pronunciation their students achieve by the end of their course of study. It is important to note that the information is not quite as complete as some of the data in light of the fact that I did not have the idea to add this question to the list until after I had already conducted several interviews. However, we can see a definite trend

within the results. Eight of the ten non-native teachers who provided feedback to this question stated that less than 25% of their students achieve a level of pronunciation which they would consider native-like. The definition of native-like as I presented it to the teachers is a level of pronunciation at which it would be fairly difficult to distinguish between the accent of a native speaker of Spanish and that of the student. However, in response to the same question, the three native speaking teachers of Spanish rated their students' acquisition between 50 and 100%. When asked to give a percentage of students who achieved a highly intelligible but not quite native-like Spanish accent, the results were as follows:



Highly intelligible as I defined to the teachers would be a student who is easily understood, but one who is obviously not a native speaker. As I anticipated, in this case the teachers' opinions shifted towards the higher end of the scale. Only one teacher stated that less than 10% of students achieved a highly intelligible Spanish accent and over half of all teachers, native and non-native, placed 51-100% of their students at the highly intelligible level.

During the course of the interviews, teachers were eager to share whatever additional knowledge they had gained throughout the course of their teaching which may not have been a direct answer to one of the questions. It was pleasing to discover that several of the teachers did at least introduce the regional accent differences between native Spanish speakers. In response to the final question about students' acquisition of a native like accent, one teacher asked "What is native?" It was a very thought-provoking question. Many times a standard Mexican dialect is taught in the schools and the fact that many other dialects exist is overlooked. In reality, a native accent to a Mexican would be considered foreign to a Spaniard.

Several teachers also mentioned the importance of studying abroad before beginning their teaching career. This is not a requirement of all universities at the present time but many feel that it should be. More than one teacher mentioned that they did not fully acquire their own native-like accent until studying in a Spanish speaking country. In light of the limited exposure many high school students get to natives, it is important that the teacher's accent be as close to a native accent as possible.

Conclusions

In light of the results of the investigation, several conclusions can be drawn regarding teaching pronunciation at the high school level. First, teachers acknowledge the fact that their students need to be instructed specifically in the area of pronunciation. However, most teachers present only basic lessons in that area. They teach the alphabet, usually focusing on vowel sounds, present cognates to the students, draw parallels between English and Spanish and leave it up to the students to hear the accent and imitate it. One major concern with the imitation method is that many if not most non-native teachers do not themselves have a native-like accent.

Second, many school systems do not formally begin foreign language instruction until the freshman year of high school when students have reached about fourteen years of age. As stated by Terrell, it is very difficult for most people fifteen or older to gain a native-like accent (Terrell 200). In addition to this disadvantage, some colleges do not require Spanish education majors to travel abroad. Many potential teachers are never really exposed to natives. Consequently, such teachers who have not been adequately exposed to a native accent may not be aware of their own foreign accent and in turn not aware of their students'. As a result, students are insufficiently instructed and corrected, and the level of pronunciation which they can achieve becomes limited.

Third, despite the fact that native-like pronunciation is acquired over a course of years, pronunciation instruction usually consists of only a few short lessons at the beginning of the students' first year of study. Any instruction beyond the first year is limited to error correction.

Fourth, certain methods of teaching may contribute to errors of English transfer. Most of the errors which teachers focused on correcting were the result of imposing an English accent on Spanish words. Although this phenomenon occurs naturally to some degree, there are some methods of pronunciation instruction which may actually encourage such transfer. When discussing teachers' specific methods of teaching pronunciation, many stated that they made comparisons between English and Spanish sounds. In the initial stages of instruction such comparisons can be helpful in introducing students to similarities between languages, however, unless the students are taught that there are differences even between similar sounds, they may never move beyond their Americanized notion of the language.

A particularly dangerous approach to this type of instruction is the focus on teaching cognates. First, this method can be risky for the fact that many false cognates exist between languages and students may fall into the habit of using incorrect vocabulary. Second, from a pronunciation standpoint, pronunciation and accentuation vary greatly between cognates, and unless students are learning cognates specifically with the intent of showing their differences, they can easily fall into the habit of imparting English pronunciation on Spanish words.

Finally, the study revealed unexpected results concerning teacher perception of students' accents at the end of their course of study. A reasonable assumption would be that a native teacher would rate their students' accent lower, due to the fact that a native would easily hear the non-native accent. However, native teachers surveyed consistently rated their students' accents higher than the non-native teachers. Multiple conclusions can be drawn from this information. First of all, it is possible that native-teachers

automatically had slightly lower standards for their students, knowing that they were not native and would probably always have a slight accent. However, by the same token, it is also possible that their students really did achieve consistently more accurate pronunciation due to constant daily exposure to native pronunciation. In the case of non-native teachers, their lower ratings may be the result of limited student progress caused by a lack of native exposure or higher standards on the part of non-native teachers. All the information at hand leads to the one conclusion that instruction of Spanish pronunciation at the high school level needs a revision. The following section provides several suggestions on how students may be able to gain a better grasp of Spanish pronunciation based on research, teacher experience, and personal perception.

Pedagogical Suggestions and Future Research Considerations

1. Hearing the Language Before Seeing it

This suggestion was made by several of the teachers who were interviewed. Many times, teachers begin by presenting the spoken language right along with written language. By allowing students to see the words before they are comfortable hearing them, they immediately begin the process of equating and imparting their first language on the foreign language and thereby solidifying their foreign accent. Some newer methods of foreign language instruction such as TPRS (total physical response system) are now incorporating a silent period for several days at the beginning in which students do nothing more than listen.

2. Using More Native Material

This is another suggestion made by many teachers, both native and non-native. Although students may not understand the words, prolonged exposure to native pronunciation can be very beneficial. One such supplement is the tapes or CDs that are provided with the text material that most teachers use. Many Spanish teachers stated that the tapes were the least effective method of teaching pronunciation. There were two different sentiments expressed on this issue. Some teachers said they were too slow, but the majority felt that they were too fast and students could not understand them. However, this mindset places comprehension over pronunciation. Naturally, students will not be able to understand everything from the very beginning, but with prolonged exposure they will begin to grasp more while at the same time making fewer pronunciation errors.

3. Providing an Accurate Model to Follow

This suggestion is in accordance with Bowen and Stockwell's book *Patterns of Spanish Pronunciation*. It is recommended that students always repeat after the teacher rather than after each other. Although some students may have fairly accurate pronunciation, chances are good that it is not as accurate as that of the teacher or native model being used. If students repeat after one another, there is always the risk that pronunciation may get progressively further from native-like from one student to another.

4. Showing Cognate's Differences Rather Than Their Similarities

As mentioned, cognates are particularly dangerous to pronunciation as they may promote making comparisons rather than contrasts between languages. They can be particularly problematic in the area of accentuation. For example, the word actor in English is accentuated on the first syllable. However the exact same word in Spanish is accentuated on the final syllable. This particular cognate presents possible errors in vowel pronunciation as well. In English, the /o/ in actor is a schwa. However, in Spanish the "o" maintains the sound of /o/, a mid-posterior vowel. In cases such as these, it is only when the students realize the differences between similar words that they can progress towards achieving a native-like accent (Bowen 1).

5. Showing the Students How to Make the Sounds

In only one interview out of eighteen did the teacher state "showing" the pronunciation to students through the use of pictures and diagrams. Students who are not able to hear native accents naturally may be able to achieve a very good accent by actually seeing how the sounds are produced and learning the mechanics of producing the sounds.

6. Evaluating the Students' Progress

According to Joan Morley in *Pronunciation Pedagogy and Theory New Views, New Directions*, by doing periodic diagnostic examinations of the individual students, teachers can monitor their progress and be more aware of the areas in which students need additional help and practice (89).

7. Teaching at All Levels

Results showed that many Spanish teachers do not teach pronunciation beyond the first year of a student's course of study. Taking into account that learning a language is a life-long process, it is reasonable to conclude that native-like pronunciation cannot be mastered after learning only a few short lessons at the first level. By teaching or even by reviewing pronunciation lessons at all levels, students can more readily recall differences between their native and second languages and thereby come closer to achieving a more native-like accent.

As with any project, there are bound to be certain challenges or limitations that occur. Admittedly, from the very beginning I had some degree of personal bias due to the fact that I had a very good Spanish teacher and I felt that her methods were correct. However, through this project, I have learned that there is not one right or wrong way to teach Spanish pronunciation. Through this compilation of information and advice from many teachers, it is my hope that others can learn and improve their quality of instruction.

A second challenge to this project was the time frame in which this research was carried out. Most interviews were conducted from May to June, a time in which most

teachers are very occupied with preparation for the end of the school year. Because of this, many teachers may not have been able to devote a lot of time and thought to their question responses. The limited time frame of this project as a whole was also a factor. The area of teaching Spanish pronunciation could be studied from numerous angles. As I conducted interviews, I realized that there were so many more avenues which could be explored such as actually evaluating the students, evaluating the teachers, and simply digging deeper into current research. It would have also been very interesting to find out more about the teachers themselves and how they learned Spanish. Undoubtedly, that information could yield even more enlightenment as to why teachers teach the way they do.

The biggest limitation to this project was that all of the information collected from sources other than published articles was very subjective. Teachers responded according to their own perception of how they were teaching Spanish pronunciation and how well they thought their students were able to acquire a foreign accent. Obviously there was some degree of teacher bias in response to the interview questions. Most teachers feel that they are doing a good job and therefore probably do not really see a need to change their methods.

One way to objectify the research would be to evaluate the class itself. In this manner most opinion would be eliminated and rating student accents would be much less subjective on the part of the teachers. In addition to observing the classroom from the standpoint of an impartial outsider, a set method of student evaluation such as a standardized test would be very helpful in evaluating their level of pronunciation acquisition.

The final limitation to this project is my own lack of personal experience in teaching Spanish pronunciation. I can only present what I have learned from research, what I have learned as a student, and what I have learned from teachers. Despite this fact, this project contains much information from a variety of sources concerning teaching Spanish pronunciation and, in fact, can probably be applied to teaching pronunciation of foreign language in general. It presents many tips learned by actual Spanish teachers over the years, and it raises awareness of different methods which may not yet have been considered by the reader. In sum, this paper is a sharing of knowledge with the hope of bettering the quality of education given in the high school foreign language classroom.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Dear

Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in this research project. As I probably mentioned to you on the phone, I am interviewing Spanish teachers throughout East Central Indiana in order to discover what methods, if any, of teaching Spanish pronunciation are currently being used at the high school level.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. If at any time you feel that you wish to discontinue your participation, you may do so with no questions asked and no action taken against you.

Also, there will be no references made to you or your school's names during the processing or presentation of this data. Any information you provide me with will be completely anonymous, so that you will feel free to be honest in your response to the questions. In the event that I should record our conversation, the tape will be erased as soon as I have recorded the data. Enclosed is a copy of the questions I plan to be asking so that you will have time to think about your responses.

Thanks again for your willingness to participate!

Sincerely,

Katy Kelly

Date of Interview:

Time of Interview:

Appendix B

School #1

Explicit teaching of pronunciation:

- basically only taught during the first year
- teachers states that by the end of the first year the students either have the pronunciation or they drop out

How taught:

- begin by learning the alphabet
- teaches the vowel sounds
- uses lesson in text book (each chapter teaches a different/new sound)
- taught 30-45 minutes a week

What works:

- repetition either from teacher to student, or from native speaker (tape) to student

Additional aids which might help:

None mentioned

Starting level of school system:

- normally freshman, however, this year the freshman had some introductory instruction from a non licensed educator
- this caused some students to begin learning/solidifying bad habits

Correction of pronunciation:

- teacher tries to correct most errors with the exception of very minor ones
- it is done in a non-threatening manner
 - i.e. "If you say it like that, they're going to know you're from ____." as opposed to "That's wrong."
- many times the students correct each other
- examples of errors corrected: "sh" as in television, "qu" as in quiet, hard g as in general

Use of audio/visual aids:

- listening activities about twice a week
- video with exposure to regional differences in pronunciation approximately every other week

Exposure to native speakers:

- audio/video cassettes
- sometimes exchange students

Additional information:

- old habits are hard to break

School #2

Explicit Teaching of Pronunciation:

- from the very beginning
- sounds related to English (example worksheet given)
- small amount of review at levels II, III, and IV

How taught:

- present then practice
- repetition is key
- at level I spend about 15 minutes a week on pronunciation
- spend less time in upper levels
 - knowledge from year I seems to carry over

Text: Bienvendios

- worksheets, videos, tapes
- first 2 chapters focus on vowels
- following chapters each contain a lesson on a specific problematic sound

What works:

- hasn't found anything that specifically doesn't work
- tries to expose, model, and gently correct
- Effectiveness of instruction seems to depend on students' attitude and focus from day to day

Additional aids:

- videos specifically targeting pronunciation
- (She knows they exist, but she has never really previewed any or used them.)

Starting level of school system:

- 7th grade 9 week exploratory class and nothing else until Freshman year

Correction of pronunciation:

- 80% of the time
- the major errors (ie vowels, "h", "ll", "qu", "r" vs. "rr")
- gentle correction; teacher usually repeats the sound correctly and the students pick up on the difference

Use of visual aids:

- none specifically for pronunciation but for reinforcement

Exposure to native speakers:

- usually once a semester/ twice a year
- some contact with foreign exchange students
- text video/audio tapes

School # 3

Explicit teaching of pronunciation:

- first 2 weeks of level 1= ear training
 - o rules included, but sometimes don't make sense to students until later in the process
 - o audio before visual representation is ever seen
 - sometimes the visual is a hindrance to new learners
- Spanish is easy to learn; what you see is what you get

How taught:

- uses a course tapes every day
- repetition

Text:

Spanish for Mastery (used for 8 years)

What works:

Subtle pronunciation lessons worked into text lessons (including audio tapes)

Additional aids which might help:

- computer programs/lab
- some students have home computer programs -normally years III and IV
- popular movies translated to Spanish
 - o teacher usually buys these for Spanish IV students

Starting level of school system:

Freshman year

Correction of pronunciation:

- At level I ~70% of errors corrected
- At levels II, III, and IV when students feel more comfortable ~90% of errors corrected

Use of audio/visual aids:

- tapes with text
- popular videos

Exposure to native speakers:

- don't get much; this is a big drawback
- mainly central Mexican dialect with slight introduction to others
- sometimes exchange student contact is available (usually at level IV)

Additional information:

- pronunciation has to start at from the beginning
- non-native teachers don't have their students speak enough
- students should record themselves (especially at the upper levels)

- many language teachers don't seem to incorporate the tapes provided with teaching materials or don't incorporate them properly
- years III and IV complementary students need should be paired so they can learn from each other. (student with good pronunciation working with a student with poorer pronunciation)

School #4

Explicit teaching of pronunciation:

- teaches rules of pronunciations specifically rules of accentuation
- if they don't understand it rules are not drilled excessively however, it is brought up in the context of errors committed (ie "rr" "ll" and vowels)

How taught:

Practice

- partner speaking activities
- students leading
 - teacher makes corrections later on if necessary
- teaches diphthongs and word blending
- spends app. 1/8 of total class time on pronunciation

Text:

Paso a Paso

- audio, video, writing sections
- doesn't use pronunciation section (says there is no time)

What levels are pronunciation taught:

- Spanish I and II emphasized
- if they don't have it by year 3, they probably aren't going to get it

What works:

- just giving rules does not work
- what does: correction, repetition (sometimes students leading), practice phrases

Additional aids which might help:

- audio recording lab

Starting level of school system:

- 8th grade exploratory option
- other than that, they begin their freshman year

Correction of pronunciation:

- praise them when they do it right
- in the beginning correct 100%
- by the end of the year as correct at little as 5%
- what is corrected: "r" vs "rr", regional differences in "ll" learned from teaching differences (from a native speaker)

Use of audio/visual aids:

- 1-2 times a week

Exposure to native speakers:

- people in videos
- exchange student place in first year Spanish class
- experience through interest/ interaction in the community
- occasional guest speakers

Additional information:

- former school had a strict observation/evaluation of teacher
 - o teacher was asked why pronunciation was being emphasized so much
 - o teacher began to question her methods
- pronunciation CAN be learned through study and practice
 - o this can be seen in learner who may have had bad teachers and yet acquire good pronunciation
- teachers should be required to study abroad

School # 5

Explicit teaching of pronunciation:

- 8th grade exposure class (exploratory)- alphabet taught
 - sounds of letters
 - ~2 weeks devoted to pronunciation
- freshmen year- accentuation and syllabication
 - regional accent differences
 - pronunciation page in chapter (about once every 2 weeks)
 - eg. ga vs. ge or ce vs. ca
 - not emphasized as much as grammar or vocabulary
- years 2,3, and 4 pronunciation not taught explicitly, but more by example and correction

How taught:

modeling correctly through teaching, native speakers, tapes which demonstrated regional differences

Text: Bienvenidos and Abordo (McGraw Hill)

What doesn't work: to see the Spanish in print before they hear it

Additional aids which might help:

- Computer program which charts pronunciation of a student against that of a native speaker
- More phonics type lessons: flip charts
- root changing verbs, diphthongs (specifically)
- more human contact
 - authentic audio materials
 - more natural (slurring, slang, etc.) for upper levels

Starting level of school system: 8th grade semester exposure class

Correction of pronunciation: more lenient to begin with...if it's understandable let it pass
gradually more correction as they learn
uses students to model

-this probably peaks at the second year and then backs off again toward third and fourth year when they become better at pronunciation

-corrects "ll," short vowels, fricatives (at upper level)

-lets "rr" go because some students can't get it

Use of audio/visual aids:

- text provided material
- 3rd and 4th year music CD's (words are given only after listening comprehension)
- telenovelas, movies

Exposure to native speakers:

- CDs, videos, sometimes exchange students

Native like pronunciation: very low: 1 in 25 years

- intelligibility- 80%

Additional information:

class sizes:40-50 first year

down to 6 by fourth year (very highly motivated students)

- pronunciation suffers without daily instruction and practice (problem with block scheduling.)
- Spanish cable at home has helped some due to more exposure to natives
- seniors are given native music CDs
 - many younger siblings make use of these too

School # 6

Explicit teaching of pronunciation: None

How taught:

- by speaking and listening they will pick up naturally
- the rules are given, but sometimes they are more confusing
- practice and repeat

Texts:

-Paso a Paso

-Somos Así

What works: -----

Additional aids which might help:

- videos of native speakers

Starting level of school system:

- Freshman year

Correction of pronunciation: 90% of the time, but slightly more at upper level

- corrects most errors and explains why they are being corrected

Use of audio/visual aids:

- tapes that go with the books every 2-3 weeks
- native speakers

Exposure to native speakers:

- tapes, videos, text, movies

Native pronunciation: 5-8 in 11 years

- highly intelligible: 10-15%

Additional information:

- teacher was not taught explicitly but had a native teacher
- parents were native speakers
- best way to learn is to travel or be exposed to natives

School # 7

Explicit teaching of pronunciation: Yes, teaches the way learned

How taught:

- needs to be taught phonetically
- non natives don't hear certain sounds naturally
- students need to see how to make the sounds and then hear them modeled
 - o however, little time is actually spent on the "how to"
 - o it's more a matter of correct modeling 100% of the time
 - o points of articulation need to be shown

Texts: Bienvenidos/Abordo (McGraw Hill)

What doesn't work:

- drilling rules

Additional aids which might help:

- visual representations of points of articulation
- audio aids based on combinations of sounds in words rather than meaning

Starting level of school system: freshman year

Correction of pronunciation:

- by Spanish IV if they don't have it don't correct it
- every other case correct all errors 100% of the time
- be sure to reward correctness
- In the past, students seemed to feel silly about pronouncing correctly, but teacher doesn't sense that feeling among students any more

Use of audio/visual aids:

- tapes with text
- novelas
- music

Exposure to native speakers:

- spring break trip to Mexico (optional)
- Hispanic students
- songs (student's don't even understand the words, but they pick up pronunciation)

Native-like pronunciation: 25%

Additional information:

- native reaction to your accent is the determining factor of fluency
- it is very important to teach accentuation early on

School # 8

Explicit teaching of pronunciation: Yes.

- start with small words (meaning is not necessary)
- repeat after teacher and gradually move to student

How taught:

- begins with individual letters
 - o repeat
 - o compare to English
- emphasize vowels
 - o i.e. ba, be, bi, bo, bu
 - o move to 2 syllable words: eg. casa, vaca, etc.
- 10-20 minutes a class period at lower levels (especially first 2 years)
- upper levels teach at the elementary
 - o before they go, it is stressed how important correct pronunciation is and it is reviewed with them

Texts: Bienvenidos/Abordo (McGraw Hill)

- mostly supplementary
- has taught long enough to know what should be taught and how

What doesn't work:

- using tapes to teach pronunciation
- only resort to these if a student is having extra trouble
- tapes and videos are more difficult for students to understand

Additional aids which might help:

- not really aware of what's available
- language lab could be helpful
 - o instead teacher walks around among students to hear their progress and motivate them to participate
 - they are more willing to seek help that way

Starting level of school system: 8th grade 12 week course

Correction of pronunciation:

- most of the time
 - o sometimes individual
 - o sometimes habitual group errors are pointed out
- all errors are corrected
 - o used to teach accentuation more, but currently does not place a great deal of emphasis on this area

Use of audio/visual aids:

- once in awhile videos are part of a station rotation, however this has not been done this year (2000-2001)

Exposure to native speakers:

- videos are used once in awhile
- a few have native speaking relatives

Native-like pronunciation: 40-50%

Additional information:

- teacher doesn't speak only Spanish in class at any level
- kids won't put in the effort

School #9

Circumstances: I was there to observe the class, the teacher had just returned from being hospitalized with pneumonia, and the students were not terribly attentive.

- second year class

Observations:

- used mostly Spanish to teach
- teacher had adequate pronunciation, but not native-like

Teacher errors (not pertaining to pronunciation):

- "tenso" instead of "tiempo verbal"
- "discutir" to mean "discuss"

Pronunciation errors:

- "r" sometimes glottal (gracias, gritar)
- "debill" instead of débil
- "arita" instead of ahorita
- "Manyuel" instead of Manuel
- "miercoless" instead of miercoles
- "coría" instead of corría
 - o student said "coria" and was not corrected
- "egsamen" instead of examen

Evidence of pronunciation instruction:

- the class was reminded that the Spanish "v" has the same sound as "b"

School # 10

Explicit teaching of pronunciation: Yes (didn't go into much detail)

How taught:

- high Hispanic population
- first year has a 3 week focus on pronunciation
 - o teacher gets more strict at higher levels
- there is a fine line between correction and discouragement

Texts:

- no text used for economic reasons
- teaches from a collection of materials which spans 20+ years

What works:

- lots of ongoing practice

What doesn't work:

- listening to cassettes is probably the least effective

Additional aids which might help:

- computers
 - o direct connections with other countries
 - o computer games and programs which map pronunciation
- listening labs can be helpful

Starting level of school system: freshman year

- before block scheduling, high school students taught Spanish to fourth graders
- also the Jr. High had a native speaker who taught her classes a little

Correction of pronunciation:

- first year: 40-50%
- fourth year: 90%
- errors most corrected: verb tense ending accentuation

Use of audio/visual aids:

- "Viva España"- type of news program geared towards students
- utilizes native speakers of Castilian

Exposure to native speakers:

- Hispanic students in the school system
- videos
- many students volunteer to teach English to Hispanics at the elementary school
- Trip to Mexico

Native-like pronunciation: 30%

Highly intelligible: 60%

Additional information:

- teachers must be aware of changing times
- rules are important, but students need to have fun and not get bogged down by all the rules

School # 11

Explicit teaching of pronunciation: None

How taught:

- modeled by teacher
- teacher encourages students to speak correctly
 - o this varies according to students' temperament
- TPRS has a "silent period" during first year in which students listen and do not speak
 - o students learn a few rules here and there
 - o they also learn vowel sounds
- not much time is spent on pronunciation
 - o students naturally pick up

Texts:

- Paso a Paso
 - o TPRS- total physical response system

What doesn't work:

- forcing students to speak and pronounce right away
 - o they get easily discouraged and afraid to try

Additional aids which might help:

- tapes
- videos
- songs

Starting level of school system:

- 12 week exploratory in 6th grade
- nothing else until Freshman year

Correction of pronunciation:

- teacher corrects errors only when it changes word meaning, is not understandable, or is a word the student should know by this time

Use of audio/visual aids:

- videos (from text), songs, over-heads

Exposure to native speakers:

- very little: songs or videos with native speakers
- a few have interaction with native speakers in the community

Native-like pronunciation: (second year teacher)

- 7-8%

Highly intelligible:

- 16-20%

Additional information:

- students should not see the written Spanish before they learn to pronounce it
 - this is part of TPRS

School # 12

Explicit teaching of pronunciation: None

- teacher wants them to learn by using real language rather than using invented exercises

How taught:

- students mimic what they hear
- first year students learn the alphabet and practice only vowel sounds in isolation

Texts:

- Paso a Paso
 - o TPRS- total physical response system

What doesn't work:

- harping on pronunciation to the point that students are afraid to speak

Additional aids which might help:

- native speakers on tapes and videos

Starting level of school system:

- 12 week exploratory in 6th grade
- nothing else until Freshman year

Correction of pronunciation:

- teacher corrects errors only when it changes word meaning

Use of audio/visual aids:

- videos (from text), CDs, Karaoke

Exposure to native speakers:

- very little; some get exposure through waiters at an authentic Mexican restaurant

Native-like pronunciation: (second year teacher)

- 10-20%
- with TPRS the number is getting higher

Additional information:

- TPRS teaches students a lot of listening comprehension before speaking
- To some extent it imitates the way babies learn their first language

School #13

Explicit teaching of pronunciation: Yes

- mainly 1st and 2nd years
- 3rd and 4th years taught all in Spanish

How taught:

- start with alphabet sounds; particularly vowels
- first year has 1 week at the beginning specifically devoted to pron. and follow up throughout the year
- second year has periodic practice of unfamiliar words
- cognates are taught
- model correctly and have students repeat

Texts:

- Bienvenidos/Abordo series
- specific worksheets and overheads are used for pronunciation

What doesn't work:

- harping on pronunciation errors
- it should be instructed subtly

Additional aids which might help: none known

Starting level of school system:

- FLES- foreign language in the elementary schools (grades 1-6) to gain interest of students
- nothing between FLES and high school
- high school students teach FLES, but only those who have mastered correct pronunciation

Correction of pronunciation:

- depends on the student, the error, and the frequency of the error
 - o some students are easily embarrassed or intimidated
- errors that would keep students from being understood are corrected

Use of audio/visual aids:

- CDs, videos, and tapes
- tapes are not used a lot because the students who really need them don't use them

Exposure to native speakers:

- text videos (text CDs not used)
- Costa Rican exchange program every 2 years
 - o 10 U.S. students go to Costa Rica for 3 weeks every other year
 - o Costa Rican students come to the U.S. on the off years

Native-like pronunciation:

- 2% (but what is native...there are so many different dialects!)
- highly intelligible: 10-15%

Additional information:

- teacher tries not to teach a specific dialect. Students are given the basics and those that are going to pursue the language further move in whatever direction they choose.
- it is important to reinforce and practice good pronunciation every year regardless of the level
- Good pronunciation at an early level allows students to begin conversation very soon (i.e. in Mexican restaurants)

School # 14

Explicit teaching of pronunciation: No. Students merely imitate the native accent of the teachers.

How taught:

- lots of student repetition of teacher (who is a native speaker)
- reading aloud
- "as needed, several times per week"
- games such as Spanish bingo
- taught during 1st and 2nd year

Texts:

- Bienvenidos/Abordo

What works:

- class repetition because student know that they are all expected to participate and speak

Additional aids which might help:

- native speaker video clips
- more songs

Starting level of school system:

- mainly freshman year
- elementary school has a language introduction program
 - o students are introduced to 4 foreign languages
 - French, German, Spanish and Japanese
 - 3rd and 4th and 5th and 6th special classes

Correction of pronunciation:

- as needed with friendly reminders
- usually "major" errors are focused on, but as time allows, the more minor errors are addressed

Use of audio/visual aids:

- CDs, videos, cassettes, transparencies, etc.

Exposure to native speakers:

- native teachers (at all levels)
- local guest speakers
- text videos and tapes

Native-like pronunciation:

- at the end of 2 years probably 50%
- at the end of 4 years the number is higher

Additional information:

School #15

Explicit teaching of pronunciation:

- Some but not a lot; it is mainly acquired by hearing native teacher and practicing

How taught:

- first 5-10 minutes of class is presented only in Spanish
- students learn new vocabulary words
- 1/3 of class is spent on pronunciation practice
- students don't like to talk a lot

Texts:

- students have a text book, but teacher chooses to use mostly outside materials

What doesn't work:

- the tapes really don't work too well
- teacher uses tapes out of obligation to the school for purchasing them
- other Spanish teachers in the system feel the tapes are too slow and repetitious

Additional aids which might help:

- more real examples of Spanish (i.e. songs, news papers, etc.)

Starting level of school system: freshman year

Correction of pronunciation:

- doesn't correct; the students correct their own or each other's errors.

Use of audio/visual aids:

- videos and popular movies in Spanish (some with subtitles)
- text tapes

Exposure to native speakers:

- teacher
- videos
- tapes
- community i.e. Mexican restaurants (voluntary)

Native-like pronunciation:

- around 50%

School #16

Explicit teaching of pronunciation:

- some

How taught:

- students receive instruction through immersion
- teacher is native and speaks mostly Spanish even at beginning level
- teaches syllables and sounds (i.e. ra, re, ri, ro, ru)
- its an ongoing process
- pronunciation is focused on during first year, but is reinforced at every level
- students are able to converse fairly well after only 1 year of instruction

Texts:

- students have text, but teacher chooses to use mostly native material such as newspapers

What works:

- speak Spanish whenever possible
- show students difference between native and non-native accent
- only speak English to explain difficult concepts (such as part of grammar)

Additional aids which might help: None

Starting level of school system: Freshman

Correction of pronunciation:

- in the beginning, the teacher corrected a lot
- now teacher's method is different because she realized that American culture teaches us not to make mistakes
 - o therefore, students are apprehensive about making errors or taking risks
- consequently, now it is the students who correct each other

Use of audio/visual aids:

- native done tapes
- songs

Exposure to native speakers:

- teacher
- teacher's family

Native-like pronunciation:

- most of them (probably 95%)

Additional information: Immersion is the key!

School #17

Explicit teaching of pronunciation: Yes.

How taught:

- start with vowels (practice by finding vowel sounds in students' chosen Spanish names)
- next day review and begin other sounds of letters
 - o this lasts several days
- compares Spanish sounds to words in English with similar sounds
- then proceed to accentuation
- focus on rules and repetition
- learn lots of vocabulary

Texts:

- Ven conmigo (after first 9 weeks) for levels 1 and 2
- Grammar book for levels 3 and 4

What doesn't work:

- this really depends on the individual student

Additional aids which might help:

- music and videos are good because they introduce students to different dialects

Starting level of school system:

- sometimes there is a 9 week 8th grade enrichment program, but this is not always offered

Correction of pronunciation:

- 90-95% of the time
- all errors but particularly stress and vowel errors

Use of audio/visual aids:

- movies
- text novelas
- music
- listening activities with text

Exposure to native speakers:

- audio-visuals

Native-like pronunciation:

- probably none
 - teacher admits that she doesn't even have native-like pronunciation
- highly intelligible: 50-75%

Additional information:

- students need to be encouraged to practice whenever they can as much as they can outside of class

School # 18

Explicit teaching of pronunciation: Yes

How taught:

- focus on vowels
- English words compared to Spanish
- teach and repeat
- in the beginning taught about 15 min a class session
 - later it is naturally incorporated in the lessons

Texts:

- Spanish I and exploratory: Spanish is fun (Amsco)
- Spanish II, III, and IV: Amsco 2nd year

What doesn't work: -----

Additional aids which might help:

- Spanish movies and CDs
 - particularly with different regional accents

Starting level of school system:

- 7th grade 1 semester exploratory

Correction of pronunciation:

- less at the beginning
 - it is just good that they are trying
- repeats correctly errors which are made
 - this gets across the point without embarrassing students]
- mostly corrects errors which change meaning

Use of audio/visual aids:

- videos
 - CDs
- (mostly additional...not what text provides)

Exposure to native speakers:

- this year trip to Mexico
- Mexican restaurant
- videos and CDs

Native-like pronunciation:

- 5 out of 70
- highly intelligible: 10-15 of 70

Additional information:

- teacher admits to not having had a native accent until after studying for ~10 years and living abroad
- study abroad is the key